

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1-7 (Canceled).

8 (Currently amended). ~~The A method of claim 7 and further, providing beating heart support comprising the step of~~

maintaining at least partial blood flow through a protected blood flow path within a portion of at least one of the vena cava, the right atrium, the right ventricle and pulmonary artery of a beating heart,

wherein the step of maintaining at least partial blood flow involves the step of pumping blood through said protected blood flow path by the action of the beating heart,

wherein said protected blood flow path is established by positioning a conduit within at least one of the vena cava, the right atrium, the right ventricle, and the pulmonary artery,

wherein said conduit is provided extending through the pulmonary valve and including a fluid inlet aperture disposed within the right ventricle,

wherein said conduit is provided extending through the tricuspid valve and including a fluid inlet aperture disposed within the right atrium, and

wherein said conduit is introduced into the right atrium through at least one of the inferior vena cava and the wall of the right atrium for passage through the tricuspid valve.

9-14 (Canceled).

15 (Currently amended). A method of ~~performing~~ providing beating heart ~~surgery support~~ comprising the step of

maintaining at least partial blood flow through a protected blood flow path within a portion of at least one of the vena cava, the right atrium, the right ventricle and pulmonary artery of a beating heart,

wherein the step of maintaining at least partial blood flow involves the step of pumping blood through said protected blood flow path by the action of the beating heart,

wherein ~~said~~ a conduit is positioned at least partially within the right atrium and extending through the tricuspid valve to pre-load the right ventricle, and

wherein said conduit is provided with a valve for preventing fluid back flow from the right ventricle into the right atrium.

16 (Currently amended). A method of ~~performing~~ providing beating heart ~~surgery support~~ comprising the step of

maintaining at least partial blood flow through a protected blood flow path within a portion of at least one of the vena cava, the right atrium, the right ventricle and pulmonary artery of a beating heart,

wherein the step of maintaining at least partial blood flow involves the step of pumping blood through said protected blood flow path by the action of the beating heart,

wherein ~~said~~ a conduit is positioned at least partially within the right atrium and extending through the tricuspid valve to pre-load the right ventricle, and

wherein said conduit is provided having at least one fluid inlet aperture disposed within the right atrium.

17-55 (Canceled).